

Encephalitis kills Massachusetts boy

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Public health officials in Massachusetts are being criticized after the death of a 9-year-old boy from mosquito-borne Eastern equine encephalitis.

Relatives of John Fontaine of Middleborough have accused state officials of not beginning aerial spraying of insecticide soon enough this summer, the Boston Globe reports.

Public health officials say they committed to the first two rounds of spraying as soon as large numbers of infected mosquitoes were detected but approximately a week elapsed before aerial spraying actually began.

"We will be working through the winter to see how we can do things better," says Alfred DeMaria, director of communicable disease control for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

There have been two other confirmed cases of Eastern equine encephalitis in the state but the 9-year-old boy is the first person to die from the disease.

Symptoms of Eastern equine encephalitis include high fever, mental confusion, headache, stiff neck and lack of energy.

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